

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA  
(FORMERLY HENRICO COUNTY)

HABS NO. 11-22

HABS  
VA  
44-RICH  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
DISTRICT NO. 11

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PHILIP N. STERN, DISTRICT OFFICER  
21 LAW BLDG., FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA

HABS  
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ST. JOHN'S CHURCH  
Church Hill, Richmond, Va.

Owner: Protestant Episcopal Church.

Date of Erection: 1741 (transepts); 1830 (nave); 1905 (chancel).

Architect and Builder: No record.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: One.

Materials of Construction: Wood.

Other Existing Records: See text.<sup>1</sup>

Additional Data: See following pages.

<sup>1</sup> See also the following references:

Brock, H.I., Colonial Churches in Virginia.

Cleaveland, G.A., and Campbell, R.E., American Landmarks,  
(1893), 22, 23.

Faris, J.T., Historic Shrines of America, (1918), 263.

Lancaster, R.A., Jr., Historic Virginia Homes and Churches,  
117.

Virginia Colonial Churches (1908), 51-56.

Carson, W.E., Historic Shrines of Virginia, 29.

# HISTORICAL DATA

St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia, located on property bounded by Broad and Grace sts., and 24th and 25th streets, in the section known as Church Hill, was built in the year 1741; this applies to that portion of the existing church now known as the Transepts. Additions were made in the form of Nave, 1830 and the Chancel, 1905. Records indicate several changes affecting the Tower.

This plot of ground was known and described in the plan of the City of Richmond, Virginia, as lots number ninety-seven and ninety-eight, and was used as a burial place for the citizens generally. In 1799 lots numbered one hundred and eleven and one hundred and twelve were purchased by the City, and the aforementioned four blocks, comprising one entire city block or square were enclosed within brick walls.

The oldest grave within the confines of this plot is that of Robert Rose, Rector of Albermarle Parish, who died in his 47th year, June 30, 1751.

The grave of George Wythe, First Virginia Signer of the Declaration of Independence, Jurist and Statesman, teacher of Randolph, Jefferson and Marshall, who died 1806, is within this plot.

Likewise the grave of Alexander Whittaker, first Minister<sup>of</sup> Henrico Parish, who officiated at the marriage of Pocahontas and John Rolfe.

The Mother of Edgar Allen Poe is buried within these historic grounds, having died in Richmond, Virginia during the year 1811.

Virginia has one of her Governor's interred here, the head-stone of whose grave is marked: Governor John Page, Died Oct. 11, 1808, age 64 years.

Henrico Parish, Virginia, is the oldest continuous Parish in the United States and embraced at one time what is now four counties; its name being derived from Sir Thomas Dale's settlement known as "Henricopolis".

In this church the Virginia Convention of 1775 was held, at which was delivered that famous and historic speech of Patrick Henry, concluding in the words, "give me liberty or give me death";

Reference: Edward F. Sinnott.

The original old Church was a quadrangle 60' long and 25' wide lying east and west, which in 1772 was enlarged by an addition 40' either way. The Church was not called St. John's until ~~in~~ the 19th century. The tower was built a few years after 1830. Reference: Colonial Churches in Virginia by Henry Irving Brock, page 66.

Reviewed by H.C.F., 1936.

Philip H. Stern

The decision to build the simple wooden structure, now known as St. John's Church, was reached at a meeting of the Vestry of Henrico Parish, held the 15th day of October, 1740. The land was the gift of William Byrd of Westover. The contract for the construction was given to Richard Randolph, Gent, for the sum of 317 pounds, 10 shillings, this amount to be raised through the sale of tobacco to be levied on the Parish. The elevation on which the Church was built was then called Indian Town. The original structure was to be 60' long, 25' broad, with a pitch of 14'. The Church was completed Jun 10, 1741. An addition to the northside of the Church was authorized December 8, 1772. Later additions brought the Nave to its present size, probably about 1830. The name "St. John's Church" was not used until about 1828. Twice in the 19th century the spire was blown down in wind storms and rebuilt.

Reference: Alexander W. Wedell in Richmond in Old Prints.

*Philip R. Stern*